The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)
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Third intersessional meeting on human rights and the 2030 Agenda
Building back better: Integrating human rights in sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and how ATOP MeaningfulWorld is working towards these goals

The objective of the intersessional meeting that took place 14 January 2021 was to consider good practices and make recommendations to build back better post COVID-19. Highlighting country-level cases and with particular focus on and linkages between SDGs 10 and 16, the meeting will aim to:

1. Discuss how historic, systemic, and institutional discrimination, including based on gender, race and ethnicity, has exacerbated inequalities in the context of COVID-19 and thus contributed to impeding the realization of SDGs 10 and 16.
2. Share examples and best practice of inclusive, non-discriminatory recovery strategies based on human rights.
3. Highlight the contribution of human rights mechanisms, the critical role of civil society and human rights defenders and of institutions that are transparent, effective, inclusive, and accountable, to protect against discrimination and address inequalities in a post COVID-19 environment.

Summary:

Chair of Meeting, Mr. Sek Wannamethee Ambassador, and permanent representative of Thailand:
First of three half day meetings which builds on the previous two intersessional meetings. The theme is building back better: Integrating Human Rights in Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has been undermining the UN SGD's and reversing socio-economic gains, magnifying pre-existing forms of discrimination and inequalities. This has jeopardized the SDG principle of having no one left behind! In this context the following was outlined:

Reduced inequalities (SDG 10), peace (SDG 16), justice, and strong institutions, and emphasized the importance of mainstreaming gender in these SDG implementations.

Meeting Objective: share and exchange good practices and make recommendations to build back better in the post covid19. In highlighting country level cases and focus on those SDGs. How historic discrimination and inequalities has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Share examples and practices of inclusive non-discriminatory practices of recovery based on human rights. Highlight contribution of human rights mechanisms, the critical role of Civil Society, and human rights defenders and of institutions that are transparent, effective, inclusive, and accountable to protect against discrimination and inequalities in a post covid environment (meeting summary will be made available at 46th session. Discussions of this meeting will also feed into the high-level political forum in July 2021).

Vice Pres. of HRC council, Her Excellency Ms. Keva Bain Ambassador and Permanent resident of the Bahamas with introductory remarks:

Gender equality and empowerment of women must be of critical importance if we are to meet ambitious commitment and international pledge to give everyone on the planet a better future by 2030. This goal is likely to succeed if a broad-based mobilization of the necessary forces is built and a bottom-up approach adopted. Therefore, we must support least of all countries, small

island developing states, and other actors in their efforts to build integrated and sustainable development at the local level. Given the key role played by women and young people in matters relating to peace and development, support for the civil society fighting for gender equality and the empowerment of women is even more indispensable especially in the context of the covid19 pandemic. While recognizing the countless challenges stemming from the pandemic, the human rights council has appealed to states to ensure human rights are at the front and center to the response of the pandemic. They Are essential. On the 29th of May 2020, the council adopted a president statement on the human rights imp of cov19. And during 44-45 session of the council the human rights implications of covid19 were addressed in 36 of the resolutions adopted. Gender responsive measures, good governance, and critical role of national human rights institutions in covid19 responses to recovery. They also highlighted the importance of protecting civic space and freedom of expression as journalists and media workers continue to face violations because of their reporting of the pandemic. Moreover, the resolution acknowledged the disproportionate effects of covid19 on persons in vulnerable situations including women and girls affected by increase in domestic violence as well increasing inequalities within and in states. The outcome of these discussions will be presented at the 46th session in March 2021 for consideration at the high-level political forum in New York.

Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris:
Responses to the pandemic have demonstrated what is possible when political resolve exists. There have been examples of governments taking swift actions to protect human rights: extending healthcare, forcing social safety nets, and instituting policies to protect people from negative health impacts and negative ripple effects. This type of political will is required to build forward better. The recovery represents an opportunity to build a new social contract based on equal opportunities for all. This is also a key objective in the implementation of the Secretary General's call to action for human rights, which underscore that rights must be at the core of sustainable development. Progress on SDG 10 and 16, the focus of this meeting is essential for this end. She wished to convey two messages: SDG 10 addressing inequalities will require renewed commitment to economic and social rights, including investing the maximum available resources in the realization of these rights. This calls for a departure from approaches that see those rights as only optional or aspirational, as for close to 90% of Member States these are legally binding commitments, recognizing that healthy and peaceful societies rest on the realization of the full spectrum of human rights. In the covid19 recovery, we must shift away

from economic policies that concentrate wealth and chronic underinvestment in public services that generate inequalities. This is not a time for austerity measures! Governments need to mobilize domestic resources, but international corporations and the secretary general's new global deal of Fair Globalization is also required. This includes a global coordinated effort to secure that the covid19 vaccines are affordable and accessible to all without discrimination. Secondly, SDG 16, for rebuilding trust in our institutions for a peaceful, just, and equitable recovery required for a stronger protection of fundamental rights. We need to reverse the closing down of civil society space and protect fundamental freedoms, including in the context of covid19. Protecting people's rights to express their views and grievances and ensuring meaningful and inclusive participation of all groups in the shaping of policies and decisions affecting them is the best formula at a time of growing pressure on social cohesion. To this end, disaggregated data to better understand and monitor progress for all groups and to develop evidence-based responses must be at the center of renewed efforts to leave no one behind and curb discrimination. To support Member States, her office in close partnership with UN colleagues is providing technical assistance to guide human rights-based and gender responsive economic recovery to the pandemic in the field. We have worked to integrate human rights into the UN's response to Covid19, developing a checklist and carrying out a review of UN economic-based response plans. Through our surge initiative we have also deployed economists to provide advice, including on addressing inequalities in the design of social protection systems and on maintaining fiscal space to meet minimum core obligations of economic and social rights. The organization continues to promote a human rights-based approach to data, including by strengthening collaboration between NHRIs and national statistics offices.

Honorable Minister of Health and Social Welfare Ms. KK Shailaja providing keynote speech: Kerala's response to the covid pandemic is driven by a humanized, inclusive approach. After dealing with the Nipah virus in 2018, we did not become complacent and have always been cognizant of always being vigilant when it comes to virus outbreaks around the world. The state has sustained its efforts to wage the battle against the deadly coronavirus by relying on our strong public health infrastructure that largely meets the targets of SDG 3. Kerala has had remarkable success in containing covid19 as the government designed and pursued a set of covid-fighting strategies that leverage its core strengths while overcoming its disadvantages. Kerala was able to flatten the curve and stop at .01%. Kerala embraced a multi-prong strategy

that has the government's commitment and accountability to the people. The capacity of working in synergy with the Civil Society, this is through the essence of making significant strides to meeting SDG 10 and 16. Built over the generations, Kerala's public health infrastructure is made up of well-equipped government hospitals with medical experts, in addition to a network of primary health centers which function as a first level contact with the population. A new mission was launched in 2017 for deliverables at a grassroots level to meet contemporary needs and completely transform the public health sector in the backdrop of SDGs 2030. The state also provides accredited social health activists to ensure citizens easy access to comprehensive healthcare support. The decentralized health delivery emphasis on making hospitals and clinics patient-friendly and complete with high-technology care facilities providing free healthcare to poor people and affordable treatment to the middle classes is the cornerstone of the system. Now regarding the decisive campaigns: the lockdown in Kerala was an organic process with people's participation and trust. This was followed by daily press conferences by our Honorable Chief Minister making sure transparent communication channels were kept open to make people understand the gravity of the situation and steps taken by the government. We started the massive Break the Chain campaign highlighting the acronym SMS: soap, mask, social distancing to sensitize the people to the new normal habits and each nook and cranny of the state. The various governments and police coordinated seamlessly to counter an emergency disease. Kerala is perhaps the only state where police delivered essential items to the doorsteps of affected people during lockdown. The government also tightened social media against the misinformation regarding COVID19. Next is the people-centered approach. As the state went into lockdown, the state adopted a hunger-free policy to ensure the people were cared for as they stayed indoors, and their livelihoods were severely impacted. Next, an economic and social welfare package that included free food kits distributed through the public distribution system and advanced dispersal of the Social Security pensions, the pre-primary protection which delivered free food to the children. We implemented reverse quarantine to protect the vulnerable population and old ages, deployed thousands of social volunteers to augment others and relieve support systems. While migrant workers in other states scrambled to go back to their hometowns, more than 90% of workers in Kerala chose to stay because they were ensured shelter and three meals a day. The government had intervention right from the community-level providing counseling and psychological support to people in isolation and quarantine to help them overcome fear and safety stigma caused by the pandemic. What worked to Kerala's advantage is the existence of the public health system down to the community level, that commands the trust of the people. In addition, the state preemptively formulated a comprehensive set of actions that were supported

and complemented by community participation, and an important facet of the strategy during the lockdown ensured that the poor and vulnerable population were not subject to any hardships and that no section of the population was disproportionately affected. The architecture of decentralized governance has served to deepen democracy and accountability of the institutions at all levels of eliciting a positive response from the public. After a year of battling the pandemic, it is time to build back from the catastrophe, a society that is organized around the welfare of humans is the bedrock for building back better from the pandemic is that while the battle against the virus is far from over, countries must ensure that they take everyone along in a united effort to recover from the pandemic through growth and development that is sustainable and inclusive. Kerala's old social revolution and development has two systems of healthcare, education, and social development in good standing and while COVID19 has proven to be a litmus test in good governance systems and healthcare systems around the world, we know that more epidemics, natural calamities, and climate disasters are waiting in the winds. The pandemic has taught us to have healthy behavior to maintain personal hygiene and far sight and the far-reaching value of the public health system and institutional hygiene is very important. The Kerala government started post-covid clinics to ensure post-covid management. Although the state has the highest literacy rate and human development indicators in the country, the pandemic threatens to setback progress made, exacerbating the vulnerability of women and most marginalized sections of societies. The government will set up several projects to increase the level for participation and bring the least visible workers in the informal economy to the fore. There are more initiatives in the development to set up sustainable ownership that has sustainable business practices to economically empower women and marginalized to uplift them from the fringes of society. The International Trade Center for Women will be set up under our gender park to encourage women proper ownership and have gender parity in the state. The government will focus on improving gender diversity in the workplace, investing in women leadership and building resilient, educated and empowered communities. The state had rolled out a welfare policy for transgender community a couple of years ago and implemented an approach project, an umbrella project for the differently abled. During the pandemic we have seen more emphasis on video conferencing, working from home, and using digital technology. This has exposed the deep digital divide and Kerala will address the issue with the introduction of a stage-free internet connection scheme to benefit the families in the state.

Thematic Portion of the meeting

Ms. Carolina Ferreira, Chief Advisor for Uruguay Agency for International Cooperation.
The pandemic hit us a few weeks ago. First measures we took were towards health protection to maintain the healthcare system and look after Uruguayans abroad. Covid affects disproportionately people of African descent, women, elderly and very young. The first measures in relation to covid were inputs relating to medical equipment to protect the population and a lot of work was done to look at those vulnerable and for example women's prisons, other prisons within the interior of the country, looked to provide increased ambulances and breathing equipment to remote areas so that the entire country could be covered. Within the same lines, this year we've been working within the framework of the strategies of the United Nations. One of the priorities for Uruguay was to leave nobody behind- to a prompt approach here looking at the economic empowerment of women and others linked to the most vulnerable people from those deprived of liberties, migrants, and other vulnerable groups. Let me list priorities linked to SDG 10 inequalities: the first was the issue linked to gender. We have been working with the UN focusing on economic empowerment for future generations with a gender-based approach. This works with women- particularly single mothers, head of households who because of covid have been in a particularly vulnerable situation and have really been feeling the consequences. We've been looking at a hybrid schooling system providing additional support and promoting employment of women in vulnerable economic situations in addition to mandatory transfers already in place. Uruguay unfortunately has another pandemic related to high levels of femicide. One of the main responses is to implement a phone line for complaints, increased electronic surveillance for couples at risk and we have seen an increased number of calls to this phone line. Because of working at home, we see that a lot of women have become vulnerable to this. Another issue we've been working on is disability. This is a cross-cutting issue with all our projects and plans we've been working on a project approved by the Disability Persons Alliance in the United Nations. This also takes a cross-cutting approach in policy and seeks to support persons with disabilities to overcome barriers to employment given the economic setbacks from covid. I also want to mention the issue of migration. The migrant population of Uruguay has increased significantly, and we've seen it maintained at the same level in the pandemic. This is an emergency situation the president has decreed, and we are looking at it with IOM and we're undertaking work on the border posts with Brazil to work with migrants on health issues but also in terms of food and housing. I hope that these issues won't just stay relevant during the pandemic but will remain cross-cutting and we build back differently after the pandemic.

Other speakers included:

Dominique Day, Chair of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

Tauriq Jenkins and Francina Nkosi, C19 People's Coalition, South Africa

Francoise Jacob, UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia

Our Response to the Meeting:

The human rights and civil society meeting was extremely informative in identifying which three trends are the top priorities that the sustainable development goals were created to address. One of these trends shows the call for environmental justice by our younger generations. The youth movement is really holding institutions accountable for what they are supposed to provide to the public and what services they are responsible for, especially governments. People want change, especially the generations coming up who want a better world that is sustainable, equitable and just. In order to achieve the SDG set forth by the UN, the community engagement tools and other methods of public involvement will be our greatest strength in pushing change forward.

COVID 19 has had disastrous effects on everyone around the world. Without anybody being able to foresee the outcome of the pandemic, it has been catastrophic for those on low income and third world countries. Health officials have been able to work vigorously in effort to provide everyone with a future vaccine as well as creating a surplus of this vaccine to allow those who are not able to afford quality health have access to the vaccine.

What was particularly fascinating about this informative meeting was Kerala's success in curbing the virus! As mentioned, they implemented a decentralized healthcare system and governance that enabled grassroots cooperation ranging from police officers, activists and other citizens. This level of transparency, trust and information enabled cooperation, deepened Democracy, and institutional accountability. Kerala's state government also driven to close the

technological gap by strengthening people's technological understanding, providing psychological support, leading in Trans rights, The International Trade Center for Women to empower women and provide proper equal ownership. They have also taken great care of their migrant workers- a whopping 90% opting to remain in the state and receive food and shelter. What I believe we as a nation can learn from the success story of the Indian state of Kerala is their "social revolution and development...two systems of healthcare, education and social development". Particularly the decentralization of the healthcare system in favor of a more grassroots and double system, the focus of transparency, providing information, cracking down on misinformation, cooperation, along with strong healthcare and social reform.

How ATOP MeaningfulWorld is making a difference:

We are an international nonprofit organization holding affiliative status with the United Nations Department of Global Communication and the Economic and Social Council committed to providing trauma outreach and prevention. Our efforts are particularly more important during the pandemic which has led to significant levels of economic and social stress. Particularly, our efforts are focused and committed to advancing **UN SDG's 10**: Reduced inequalities, as well as **SGD 16**: peace, justice, and strong institutions, while emphasizing the important gender differences that must be addressed in implementing said SDGs. In this regard, MeaningfulWorld has worked tirelessly to promote the reduction of inequalities through our humanitarian outreach missions in Kenya, Rwanda, D.R. Congo, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Romania, Armenia, Lebanon, Syria, Sri Lanka, India, Japan, Turkey, Korea, the West Bank and within the U.S. in Louisiana, Southern Florida, California,

The focus of these missions centers the providing and involvement of local communities with training during our workshops centered around the use of various psychosocial models such as the 7 Step Integrative Healing Model, and the IDEAL model consisting of Identifying Emotions, Expressing Emotions, And Letting Go of emotions.

Such models have been used to rehabilitate and empower victims of trauma all around the world including victims of Gender Based Violence in Haiti and of Genocide in Rwanda. The varying applicability of such models extends the efforts of MeaningfulWorld around the world in the context of a traumatic and devastating event such as COVID19, which has compounded various forms of psychological and socioeconomic trauma in isolation of lockdowns and unemployment.

Currently, MeaningfulWorld hosts weekly support groups over Zoom where participants are provided with psychological support using the 7 Step Integrated Healing Model whereby: participants 1) identify emotion and 2)express emotion, 3) receive empathy from support group members, 4) explore the deeper meaning of their emotions, 5) and wherein group members provide information with each other on ways to manage their emotions, 6) and on ways to connect and nurture mother earth, before 7) lastly participating in meditative breathing techniques.

Through this methodology, we transform the victim's approaches to trauma and empower victims of trauma through the expression of meaning, espousing emotional intelligence, awareness within individuals through our training and foster peace (SDG 16). Additionally, we also host monthly workshops over zoom centered around focusing on healing those who have experienced any sort of traumatic experiences, including GBV (Gender Based Violence). Our monthly workshops are centered around Mindful Leadership and Forgiveness (with emphasis on Conscious Leadership, Forgiveness, Logotherapy skills), Selfcare & Post Traumatic Growth (with emphasis on Emotional Intelligence, Preventing Trauma, and fostering Post Traumatic Growth), Post Trauma Healing and Meaning Making (with emphasis on Disaster Relief, Rehabilitation, Mindfulness, Empathy, and skills for managing stress anxiety and fear), and Conflict Transformation and Peace Building (with emphasis on Assertiveness, Anger Management, Forgiveness, and Non Violent Communication skills).

These workshops are also traditionally conducted during our humanitarian missions, and hosting of workshops on Zoom ensures accessibility for all who may wish to join regardless of where they may be at a critical time during which access to mental health services has been greatly interrupted.

Generally, our workshops are tailored to the needs of the local communities based on the assessment of local leaders who we reach out to prior and during our missions. Following identification of community needs, it is essential to implement adequate and appropriate programing while remaining flexible and attentive to local needs and adapting schedules to provide training to the community as needed. Additionally, implementation and continuation of our work requires constant follow up and nurturing of relationships even after our departure, and ultimately these steps allow for grassroots collaboration at any level as we also reach out to various entities such UN and government entities, other civil society, and community groups, and bring these groups to work together, incorporating that into our workshop programming.

Through our Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) we encourage and mentor underprivileged youth in inner city neighborhoods to build everlasting skills such as improved

study habits, showing empathy, standing up against bullying and fostering emotional growth to reach their full potential through skills that will carry them throughout their academic careers and **_build a better_** future!

We are particularly dedicated towards empowering females of all ages to become confident women who can strike out into the world as leading professionals who can not only stand up for themselves and have their voices heard but also use their nuanced experiences to enable self-discovery, transformation, and finally, use their voices and stories to empower others. In this way we are committed to SDG 10 (reducing inequality) and bridging the gap of inequality to build a more equal and inclusive world.